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THE MYSTERIOUS WEDDING.

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The Island of Zealand is united on the north-west by a narrow, desolate, sandy neck of land to a peninsula, which is beautiful, fertile, and covered with villages forming within themselves one parish. Beyond the only little city of the peninsula, however, the country extends to the stormy Categat. It is a region of fearfully desolate and wild character. Quicksands have prevented every trace of vegetation, and moving sand heaps, the sport of storms which unrestrainedly blow over the land from the rude sea, perpetually change their position, are heaped up, blown away, and then again collected in another place. I spent an hour, not without danger, in travelling through this region, which left behind in my mind an image of the wildest desolation. Whilst I was riding solitarily thro' this dreary, sandy district, there arose from the sea, northward, a tempest with lightning. The waves heaved themselves with a troubled not on the wild stormy clouds careered along the sky; the heavens became darker and more threatening every moment; the sand began to move in vaster masses under the feet of my horse, and at length even whirled into the air. It was impossible to discover the path; the horse sank deeper and deeper into the loose sand—heaven, earth, and sea were all intermingled, every object was concealed in a cloud of dust and sand. There was not a trace of life or vegetation; the storm whistled through the air; the raging billows lashed the shore; the thunder rolled in the distance; and, scarcely able to penetrate the cloud of dust, flashed the troubled, dark red lightning. The danger was instantaneous, when all at once, a sudden, violent fall of rain brought the whirling sand into a state of repose, and allowed me, entirely wet through, to find my way to the little town.

It had been a fearful commingling of the elements. As the earthquake is a deep groan from the deep bosom of nature, so did this chaos present an image of wildly tempest character; all hope destroyed; every joy shattered; the ruins of the past concealing cruel rage and sorrow; restless passions hidden beneath desolation; the voice of conscience threatening thunder-like in the distance and consuming fire flashing darkly through the troubled soul, until the so long sealed up fountain of tears vehemently burst forth, and the melancholy of the lacerated soul is buried in their waters.

In this desolate region there stood in former time, a village, called Thorwig, at about the distance of a mile from the sea. The quicksands, however, undermined the village, and the inhabitants, mostly fishermen, have now settled themselves farther from the shore. The church alone remains upon firm ground, having been built upon a rocky height, and new stands solitary, surrounded by the mournful, moveable desert. This church is the scene of the following mysterious relation.

During the first half of the last century there sat one night in this solitary chamber the venerable old preacher of the place, sunk in deep meditation. The hour approached midnight. The house inhabited by this good man lay at the end of the village, and such were the simple manners of the inhabitants, and so little were they troubled by mutual suspicion, that bolts and bars were unknown to them, and every door was unsecured, excepting by the simple fastening of a latch. The night-lamp burned dimly; the solemn silence was only broken by the rushing of the sea, and the pale moon mirrored itself in the waves. At that moment the door was heard to open; the old pastor heard the sound of human footsteps upon the stairs, and instantly imagined it to be a summons for him to the death-bed of some peasant neighbor who needed ghostly consolation at his hands.

As he was thus thinking, two strangers entered the room wrapped in light-colored cloaks;—one of them advanced politely towards him. "Sir," said he, "you must immediately accompany us. You must celebrate a marriage; the bridal pair are already waiting for you in the distant church. This sum of money," said he, showing to the old man a purse full of gold, "will sufficiently recompense you for your trouble and from the terror of so unexpected a summons."

The old man stared silently and horrified at the strange figures which seemed to him to have something fearful, nay, spectre-like in their appearance. The stranger repeated his errand pressing and beseechingly.

When the old man had somewhat collected himself, he began mildly to remonstrate and to represent to the stranger that his office did not permit him to perform such solemn rites without knowledge of the parties or without those preparatory formalities which the law required. With that the other stranger stepped forward, "Sir," said he, in an imperative tone, "you have your choice; follow us and receive the offered reward, or remain here—but in that case a bullet will pass through your head;" and with these words he drew forth his pistol which he held to his forehead, and thus waited for his answer.

The old preacher turned pale; and without saying a word, rose up in terror, dressed himself quickly, and then said, "I am ready."

The two strangers had spoken in the Danish tongue, but so as to leave no doubt of their being foreigners. They walked silently on thro' the night-stillness of the village, and the preacher followed them. It was a perfectly dark autumn night, for the moon had by this time set. When they had passed the village the old man, speechless from terror and surprise, saw that

the church was lighted up; and his attendants wrapped in their white cloaks walked on without speaking, and with rapid steps through the dreary, sandy plain, whilst he wearily and thoughtfully followed after. When they had reached the church a bandage was fastened over his eyes. He heard the side door, with which he was well acquainted, open grating on its hinges, and he felt himself thrust in by force, amid a great crowd of people. He heard a murmur through the whole church, and in his immediate neighborhood a language spoken which was totally unknown to him. He imagined it to be Russ. He stood with his bandaged eyes pressed on all sides by the throng, helpless and in great perplexity, when all at once he was seized upon by a hand and drawn forward with force thro' the crowd. At length, as it appeared to him, the throng of people withdrew, and the bandage was removed from his eyes. He recognised one of his attendants, and found himself standing before the altar. A row of immense burning tapers in magnificent silver candlesticks ornamented the altar; the church itself was so brightly illuminated by many lights which the distant object was discernable, and as, but a few moments before, when his eyes were bound, the murmur of the dense crowd through which he was thrust was fearful to him, so also did now the awful silence of this same throng fill his terrified soul with horror. Although the side aisles and benches were closely occupied by men, still the middle aisle was perfectly empty, and the preacher saw here a newly opened vault. The stone which had hitherto covered it was reared up against a chair. The preacher saw around him none but men, yet still in the far distance he thought he could discern the form of a woman seated in a chair. The profound stillness lasted for some minutes without any one breaking it.

At length a man arose whose magnificent attire distinguished him from all the rest, and betrayed his high rank. He stepped hastily along the empty aisle whilst the crowd gazed at him, and his footsteps echoed through the church. The man was of middle height, broad shouldered, and of a firm athletic build; his step was haughty; his countenance was of a dark hue; his hair raven-black; the features strongly marked; the lips compressed as if with anger; his nose of a bold aquiline cut, added to the impressiveness of his expression, whilst thick and dark eyebrows shadowed the small black eyes in which burned wild rage. He wore a green dress ornamented with heavy gold buttons, and on his breast shone a star. The bride who knelt beside him was splendidly dressed, nay, even with great care. A sky-blue robe richly embroidered with silver, enveloped her slender form, and fell in large folds around her graceful limbs. A circlet of diamonds ornamented her fair hair. The utmost grace and beauty exhibited themselves in her otherwise disfigured countenance. The corpse-like cheeks seemed petrified; not a feature moved; the lips of ashy whiteness appeared dead; the eyes expressionless, and the powerless arms hung down each side of the drooping body. Thus knelt she, an image of death, and an overwhelming horror seemed to have locked both life and consciousness in a stupor.

The preacher now for the first time perceived an ugly old woman in a whimsical, gay colored dress, whose head was covered with a red turban, and who looked about grimly and yet jeeringly above the head of the kneeling bride. Behind the bridegroom stood a man of gigantic size and with a dark aspect, who looked straight before him with a grave and immovable expression.

The preacher, paralyzed by horror, remained silent for some time, till a wild glance from the bridegroom admonished him to commence the ceremony. That which increased his perplexity still more was the uncertainty as to whether the bridal pair understood his language; he thought it probable that they did not. He however, collected himself and made the attempt by inquiring from the bridegroom his own and the name of his bride, "Neander and Feodora," replied he in a stern voice.

The preacher now commenced to read the marriage formula, whilst his voice faltered, and he lost himself so frequently that he was obliged to repeat the words, yet still neither of the bridal pair appeared to notice his bewilderment so that his conjecture that they were not fully acquainted with the language became only the more confirmed. When he asked therefore,—"wilt thou, Neander, acknowledge as thy lawfully wedded wife, Feodora, who kneels here at my side?" he doubted whether the bridegroom clearly understood, would reply; but to his astonishment, he replied, "Yes," in a fearfully, yelling tone, which seemed to ring through the whole church. Deep sighs which proceeded from the attendant crowd accompanied that horrible "yes," and a silent shudder, like a lightning flash, agitated the deathly pale features of the bride. He then turned himself round and as if he would awaken the bride from her deathly stupor, asked a loud voice, "If thou, Feodora, wilt acknowledge as thy lawfully wedded husband, Neander, who kneels by thee, then reply in an audible 'yes!'"

With that the almost dead bride seemed to arouse herself; a deep sorrow agitated her relaxed features; the pale lips moved, a quickly flashing fire seemed to kindle in her glances; her breast heaved, a violent flood of tears extinguished the flashing light of her eyes, and the "yes," which she uttered was like a cry of anguish from the dying, and seemed to find a deep echo in the involuntary tone of pity which

burst from the breast of the crowd. The bride sank backward into the arms of the old woman. Several minutes passed in fearful silence, and then the preacher saw the corpse-like bride kneeling again in deep unconsciousness, and the ceremony was ended. The bridegroom arose and led the faltering bride to her former place; the old woman and the gigantic man followed.

The two men who had brought the preacher hither, again appeared, bound his eyes, and pushed him not without difficulty, through the crowd, and after they had put him out of the door he heard it bolted in the inside and he was left to himself. Here he stood for a moment alone and uncertain whether the awful circumstance, with all its spectre-like detail, might not be all a dream. When he tore the bandage from his eyes and saw the illuminated church before him, and heard the murmuring of the crowd within, he was convinced that this mysterious affair was all reality. In order to ascertain as possible of the after occurrences, he concealed himself in a corner of the church and on the side opposite to that which he entered, and as he here listened, he perceived that the tumult within became every moment more violent. It seemed to him that a combat took place, and he seemed to hear the stern voice of the bridegroom imperiously commanding silence. A long pause then succeeded, a shot was fired, the cry of a female voice was heard; again succeeded a pause; then a sound as of men at work with tools which occupied almost a quarter of an hour. The lights were extinguished, the tumult again arose, and the whole throng poured out of the church and hurried rapidly down to the sea.

The old preacher now arose and hastened to his own village; when he arrived there he awoke his neighbors and friends to tell them, still overcome by horror as he was, of the strange and incredible events which had just happened to him. But his simple neighbors had seen every thing around so perfectly quiet, and in its ordinary state, that all at once another horrible idea seized upon them, which was that some unfortunate accident had deranged the mind of their beloved pastor, and it was therefore with extreme difficulty, and only as they thought to indulge his strange whims, that they were induced to provide themselves with crowbars and spades, and accompany him to the church.

In the meantime day had dawned, the sun rose and as the preacher with his attendants ascended the hill upon which the church stood, they discovered a ship of war under sail at a considerable distance from their own shore, bearing away to the north. A sight so surprising in these seas incited them somewhat to pay attention to the preacher's report, more particularly as on arriving at the side-door of the church it was found to have been forcibly entered. Full conviction awaited them within; the preacher showed them the grave which he had seen open the night before. It was very easy to see that the stone which covered it had been raised and newly laid down again. The crow-bars were put into requisition, and in the vault which lay below was immediately discovered a new and richly decorated coffin. With almost youthful impatience did the aged man himself descend into the vault, others followed him; the lid of the coffin was raised, and the old man saw that his suspicions were verified. In the coffin lay the murdered bride. The magnificent diadem was taken from her head. The ball had penetrated the heart. The expression of deep sorrow was vanished from her countenance, a heavenly peace had glorified the beautiful face, and she lay there like an angel. The old man wept aloud, and threw himself on his knees by the coffin, praying for the murdered lady; the silent astonishment fell upon all those who were with him.

The preacher considered it to be his duty instantly, and without any disguise, to make known this occurrence to the Bishop of Zealand as his spiritual head, and until he had received an answer from Copenhagen on the subject he required his friends on their oath to keep all profoundly secret. The vault was again closed and no man dared to speak on the subject. Suddenly a respectable man made his appearance from the capital, he made strict inquiry after all that had occurred; required to be shown the grave; commended the silence which had been observed on the subject, and sternly insisting that the circumstances should remain a secret, and threatened any one who ventured to speak of it with the severest punishment.

After the death of the preacher it was found that he had given a narrative of this strange event in the register belonging to the church. Some persons believe that it had in some way a mysterious connection with the rapid and violent changes of dynasty which took place after the death of Peter the First and Catharine. But it would be difficult, if not impossible, to solve the deep enigma of this horrible deed.

CAPTAIN TOBIN.—This eccentric individual, whose letters to the Secretary of War and other official characters caused so much merriment, is thus accounted for by the New Orleans Delta:—"Our friend of the Chronicle, is a together at fault. Capt. Tobin was not born in Pittsburgh nor raised on 'Scotch Hill,' and his name is not James. His Christian name is George; he was raised—pretty much upon goat's milk, and this may, in some measure, account for his eccentricities—on the hills of Wicklow, Ireland. Trinity College, Dublin, was *alma mater*, where he played off many pranks upon the professors, porters, sizars and freshmen, as Frank Weber himself avers. By-the-by, we are half inclined to believe that Tobin it was who sat to Leaver for that picture.

From the Washington Union. THE ROAD FROM VERA CRUZ TO MEXICO. NO. 2.

MR. GREENHOW'S NOTES, No. II.

In the preceding number I described the road from Vera Cruz to Jalapa, the length of which, according to my estimate, is 68 miles. It passes over an uneven surface, being, in fact, a series of ascents and descents from the vicinity of Vera Cruz to Plan del Rio. At the latter place begins the first grand ascent from the low hot country of the coast—the *Tierra Caliente*—to the table land of the cooler regions, the *Tierra Templada*; and Cerro Gordo, on the line of separation between the two climates was wisely chosen by the Mexicans for their stand against our forces, which would, no doubt rapidly melt away if confined much longer to the pestiferous wastes below. Jalapa is at the other extremity of the first line of heights, about four thousand feet above the ocean level; and there begins the second ascent to the great central plateau of Mexico, among the mountains of the *Sierra Madre*, or principal chain dividing the waters which flow into the Atlantic from those entering the Pacific.

The view of these mountains, obtained on the heights near Jalapa, is one of the grandest I have ever seen, though by no means so picturesque as many which I recollect in Switzerland, and which the actual as well as the visible mass of the objects is inferior. The defect in the Mexican picture is occasioned by the extreme blackness of the mountains, and by the too great regularity of their outline, except at the southern end, where the volcano of Orizaba rears its snowy cone aloft from the other parts of the chain to the height of nearly seventeen thousand feet above the level of the sea. In the northern part of this view of the *Sierra Madre* is the great mountain of Perote, called *El Cofre* by the Spaniards, from its fancied resemblance to a chest, though a hog's back might be cited with more propriety, in order to convey an idea of its form; and at its northern end is the gap or pass, affording, so far as yet known, the only means of communication by wheel carriages between the coast of the Mexican Gulf and the high table-land of the interior, south and east of that between Monterey and Sallito. It seems very probable that many such passes, equally practicable, might be found in the space of a thousand miles separating the two here mentioned; but Mexicans are not the people to look for them.

On approaching Jalapa before sunrise I obtained a seat on the outside of the coach in order to enjoy the prospect, which was wholly different from any seen on the preceding day. The lower country is, in fact, almost entirely uncultivated; scarcely an acre of ground on the way exhibits the marks of human labor; neither grains, nor fruits, nor any other vegetables appear to be produced; and, as the people are not engaged in manufactures of any kind, it is difficult to imagine on what they subsist. I remember that on reaching the National Bridge, at noon of a hot day, I had proposed to enjoy the luxury of a pine-apple fresh plucked from the plant; but there was no such thing in the village or its vicinity, nor could I procure there, or any where else between Vera Cruz and Jalapa, an orange or a lemon, or any other fruit whatever. In the vicinity of the latter place, on the coast, signs of industry and civilization were exhibited on all sides; the houses had walls, generally made of adobe, or unbaked bricks, plastered and whitewashed, and covered with tiles. We drove on a road as well paved as the streets of many of our cities, bordered by hedges of aloes, prickly-pears, and other tropical plants; and around were fields of Indian corn, beans, sugar-canes, and coffee trees, fig-trees, and grape-vines, all loaded with fruits. The gloomy mass of the *Cofre de Perote* rose high in front; and on it, as a background to the picture, Jalapa at length appeared, relieved with its low white houses and tall church towers, embosomed in rich foliage on the declivity of the small mountain of Maculitepec. The beauty of the scene increased as we drew nearer, and on entering the town the pleasurable feelings excited were not dispelled by any of those signs of filth and misery which I had so often in Italy found enclosed in the most charming environs. The streets are clean; the houses, solid and exceeding one story in height, are neatly though plainly built, with balconies, mostly of wood, to the windows; and, except in one or two of the principal streets in which the shops are situated, they are generally surrounded by gardens. Few of the buildings have any pretensions to grandeur, the most remarkable being the *Parroquia*, or parish church, on the market-place, and the convent of the Franciscans in its vicinity, one of the oldest religious establishments subsisting in Mexico. Of the other houses, one of the best was the hotel called the *Mesón de las Diligencias*, at which our carriage stopped, opposite to the convent; and there I remained two days, in order to recruit my strength, which had been completely exhausted by the fatigues of the preceding thirty-six hours, added to thirty days of constant sickness on board of the *Vandalia*.

I carried a letter of introduction to General Castro, the commandant-general of the department of Vera Cruz, who had his headquarters at Jalapa; and this I delivered as soon as propriety would allow. He was about fifty years old, with a stout, well-knit person and a good, determined face, not particularly remarkable, however, in any way. He received me very politely, after the Mexican fashion, insisting, in a Pickwickian sense, of course—that his house and all its contents were at my entire disposition; and then proceeded to offer me, in sincerity, every facility which I could desire while I remained within the limits of his authority. We talked some time on different matters, during which he was evidently attempting to find out the object of my journey; but he was, however, necessary to elude his inquiries; and as I afterwards learned, the report which he sent by the diligence to Mexico was as far from exact as it could well be. I saw him, several times during that and my subsequent visit to Jalapa, and was much pleased, in the end, with his good humor and frankness; so that I could not help lamenting, as I plainly told him on parting, that it should have been his lot to order the execution of so many of our fellow-citizens, who had landed with Mexico in his foolish attempt on Tampico, a short time previous.

I had a letter also to his excellency Don Juan Barrena, the lieutenant governor of the department, whom I found to be the keeper of a very small shop in the lower part of the town. He was an amiable and intelligent person, formerly a man of wealth, which had been all lost in the revolution, and highly respected for his honesty and patriotism, as well as for his firm-

ness and good sense. He inquired particularly concerning our former minister in Mexico, Mr. Poinsett, (then Secretary of War,) for whom he seemed to have the greatest regard; and I afterwards found that this feeling was fully reciprocated.

The magnate of the place, taking precedence of all governors and commanders at that time, however, was Mr. Welsh, an English gentleman, formerly consul of his nation at Vera Cruz, who having accumulated a large fortune in business as a merchant, and married a lady of the country, had vested his funds in land and cotton manufactures at Jalapa. In his plantation, which was devoted chiefly to coffee trees, he was endeavoring to combine the neatness and completeness of an English farm with grandeur of a Mexican hacienda; and in this he had succeeded to all appearance fully, though whether the returns would justify the outlay might be questionable. For his manufactory he was erecting, at vast expense, a dam in the shape of a wall of cyclopean dimensions, across the little stream which flows through the town; and by these works he was distributing among the inhabitants large sums of money, which could not fail to ensure his popularity so long at least as the supply should be kept up. He informed me that he could obtain a sufficient number of laborers, who would work well at three reals (37½ cents) per day, regularly paid; and he appeared to be very sanguine as to the success of his plans.

[Since writing the above, I learn that Mr. Welsh's scheme proved abortive, and that he has been entirely ruined by the failure of his cotton factory, in consequence of which he has been obliged to leave Jalapa.]

The only American whom I found there was Mr. Samuel Jewett, of Vermont, who had lived in Mexico ever since the establishment of its independence, and had also married a native of the country. He appeared to have been engaged in almost every kind of business, and was then making combs and bleaching wax, with what success I could not learn. He, however, lived very comfortably, and gave me a dinner, one of the best of which I preserve the remembrance; it was wholly Mexican, as he had promised on inviting me; and though Senora Jewett acknowledged that she had been sparing in her *chile* (red pepper) on my account, there was enough left to scorch my throat considerably at first. The meat was nevertheless delicious, and the dessert beyond all praise; I remember particularly the salad of lettuce, dressed with the pulp, or marrow as it is more properly, of the *aguacate*, or alligator pear—the best, I think, of all tropical fruits; and also something between a custard and a pudding, called "*Aguas de ley*," which I shall leave untranslated. I am, indeed, inclined to believe from my observation that the Mexicans have carried gastronomy to a high degree of perfection, and that they are gifted with peculiar faculties in this, as in several other branches of the fine arts; the materials afforded by their country are excellent, and, with a little care, would be unrivalled.

I saw every thing, indeed, about Jalapa worthy of notice, including much that was interesting to a stranger in Mexico, though little that seems to merit particular description here. As regards climate and soil, it is one of the most remarkable spots in the world. Nowhere else, perhaps, can be found a temperature so generally equable and agreeable, or so great a variety of vegetable productions, all excellent of their kinds. The same dress—a summer dress—is worn at all seasons; in the middle of July I found the weather, in the day, warm, but not more so than was comfortable, and the nights delightfully cool. Showers fell in every hour, the clouds appearing and disappearing with a rapidity most astonishing; and, during the dry season, as I was assured, the extreme aridity prevailing in all other parts of the country is not felt at Jalapa, where the air is plentifully supplied with moisture by the north winds from the Gulf. As to its productions—the pine-apples of Jalapa have been pronounced the best in the world; the coffee which I drank, gathered from trees which I saw growing, was of the finest flavor, and no less delicious was the chocolate procured from the same fields. All the other tropical vegetables abound in perfection; and, strange to say, many of those also which are considered as peculiar to the temperate zone, and even to its northern portions. Never have I eaten more exquisitely flavored peaches, or more delicate lettuce, than those which were daily served on the table of our jolly Scotch landlord, McCartney—peace be to his soul!—and on that of my worthy fellow countryman Jewett.

The town contained then about eight thousand inhabitants, and had probably held a greater number at some previous period, as there were many deserted houses in the outskirts. The houses were, as already said, generally of but one story in height, and were almost all built in the form of a hollow square, with a court (*patio*), surrounded by an arcade, in the centre of which were usually filled with small trees or shrubs, which presented most pleasing appearance, as seen from the streets through the wide doorways, while the music of a guitar might generally be heard from within at any hour. The inhabitants seemed to be, with few exceptions, of mixed blood, those of pure European race being nearly all foreigners; and this is the case throughout Mexico, except in the capital. The people of the surrounding country, of whom I saw great numbers in the market-place, were all apparently pure, or nearly pure, Indians, resembling strongly in features the aborigines of our own States, they are very dark, and in general short and stout, with dull grave faces, seldom lighted up by a smile or any other sign of excitement. The dress of the men is uniformly a sort of skirts, made of a piece of coarse blue woollen cloth, about a yard wide and two and a half yards long, doubled, with a slit in the middle for the passage of the head, and sewed up at the sides, except where space is left for arm-holes; this tied about the waist with a rope or strap, sandals of raw hide, and a palm-leaf hat with a round crown, form in general their whole equipment. Some of them, however, have also the zerape, or blanket, with a slit in the middle, which is universally used in the higher country. The women commonly wear a short chemise and petticoats; though I saw many without the former article, or any other covering above the waist than the *rebozo*, or scarf, which every woman, of every class in Mexico, always carries in place of a shawl and bonnet. The *Parroquia* church is a large old building of plastered stone, surmounted by a dome covered with glazed tiles and a high tower. The interior is divided by two rows of columns supporting arches, into a nave and two sides aisles, and, by my measurement, is 220 feet long by 100 wide—larger probably than any church in the United States except the Baltimore Ca-

thedral; it is in the heavy old bastard Italian style, and is filled with the wondrous ornaments of gilded wood and most barbarous pictures. The Franciscan convent is a very large and ancient pile of buildings, thrown together without any regard to the effect of the whole, and embracing a labyrinth of cloisters and passages. There were only four friars in it, one whom, a very old man, I saw, but had little conversation with him, as he seemed to be feeble.

In the market place, in front of the church, are sold all kinds of fruits and vegetables, and various articles of pottery, of a peculiarly fine clay, and of beautiful forms, resembling the Etruscan. All cooking utensils, and indeed almost all the vessel used in Mexico, are of pottery, neither cast iron nor copper nor tin-plate being employed on account of the high price of manufacture and transportation. I also saw small lumps of quick-lime sold; and on inquiring the object, was informed that lime was essential in making *tortillas*, or corn cakes, which from the principal food of the greater part of the population of Mexico. The mode of making these cakes has been so often described that almost every one is acquainted with it. To those who are ignorant of this important branch of Mexican domestic economy I may say at first that little corn meal is used in Mexico, because there are few corn mills; and there are few corn mills, because there is little demand for corn meal. Instead of grinding the corn, they soak it in water with quick lime, by which the grains are swollen to more than double the natural size, and the outer husk is loosened, so that it may be easily detached by washing. After washing in many waters, the mass left is placed on a smooth flat stone, and kneaded or rolled with another stone, shaped somewhat like a roll-pin, until it is reduced to a fine paste, which is then spread into very thin cakes, and baked on a plate or griddle of earthenware. The same paste, mixed with water and boiled, forms a kind of porridge or gruel called *atole*, which, when sweetened, is very good, and much used among all classes.

The second great article of food in Mexico is the *frijol*, or bean, which is infinitely better than any other bean I have ever tasted; it is small, and generally of a dark purple color, but when boiled has much the appearance of chocolate, and is, I am informed, nearly the same as the *coupee* of South Carolina. The third necessary of life is *chile*, or red pepper, of which the quantity used by each individual daily is almost incredible. A Mexican covers a tortilla about six inches in diameter with beans stewed into a paste, and then throwing over the whole a large spoonful of powdered *chile*, he doubles up the mass and swallows it without any sign of inconvenience. I have seen persons eat the fresh peppers about as large as cherries by the dozen, with bread, although when I applied one of them to my tongue it produced on me the effect of a white hot iron. Yet the taste seems to be as easily acquired as that for ardent spirits: ere I had been a fortnight in Mexico I was, in a great measure, reconciled to these fiery condiments, and could eat the *mole*, or devil, which is generally produced at the end of a dinner, without much difficulty.

In the morning of Monday, the 17th of July, I resumed my seat in the stage-coach for Mexico. On this occasion we had but six mules, which were driven by the coachman on the box without a postilion. The only passenger besides myself was a poor Frenchman, who seemed overjoyed to find himself addressed by me in his native language; by the side of the driver sat the *Corrao*, or mail-carrier; and on the top of the coach lay a dirty Indian in a ragged uniform, who played the part of a guard in order to make good the assurance given in the advertisement that the coach was thus protected against all damage from robbers.

After winding for a couple of miles around the top of the mountain of Maculitepec, on which Jalapa stands, we crossed the little stream of Cedeño, where the ascent of the *Sierra Madre* begins. The road passes along the side of the *Cofre de Perote*, towards the depression of the ridge at the northern part of that mountain, and presents a series of steep ascents, interrupted at long intervals by slight depressions of the surface. Great expense was bestowed on this part of the road by the Spaniards, who paved it with large blocks of lava; but, like all works of the same kind executed by that nation, it was badly laid out, and is now abandoned in many places for more convenient lines of direction. Passing the village of *Banderilla*, (the little flag,) we, in two hours and a half, reached another about ten miles from Jalapa, called *San Miguel del Soldado*, consisting of two or three ruinous buildings and an immense church of plastered stone, one of those which each great landed proprietor was obliged by law or by custom to erect on his domain. At a short distance beyond this place we gained an eminence from which the prospect embraced a vast extent of country, including the sea as far south, as I was informed, as Vera Cruz; but ere we could examine it in detail we were involved in a thick mist, which soon changed to a cold drizzle, and we were obliged to draw up the glasses of the carriage.

Ere we had advanced many miles from San Miguel all signs of tropical country disappeared. My thermometer fell from 76, where it stood when I left Jalapa, to 45; and I suffered severely from the change, although prepared for it by thick clothing and a wedded cloak. The rain continued, having all the appearance of one of our violent northeasterly storms; and in place of the dense growth of trees covered with vines, we saw only a few pines at intervals, in sheltered places. This was in the 19th degree of latitude, at midsummer, under a sun directly vertical. At length, after toiling, or rather climbing, in this manner for another hour and a half, we reached the village of *La Hoya*, (the hollow), consisting of a few log huts in a rock or dell of the mountain; and immediately beyond it appeared a scene of the most extraordinary character. We were at the summit of the pass of the *Sierra Madre*, nearly a mile and a half in absolute elevation above the level of the sea; and were crossing a plain strewn with masses of lava of all sizes, from fifty feet in height downwards, among which rose here and there a few stunted pines, wretched vegetable abortions, rendering the desolation more desolate by their forlorn aspect. From where these masses of lava, like so many gigantic cinders, were projected, is a mystery yet fathomed; no sign of a crater having been discovered in the vicinity; and the only mode of accounting for their appearance is the one suggested by Humboldt,—that they may have been thrown out by some lateral eruption from the *Cofre de Perote*—how many thousand ages ago there are no means of estimating.

After crossing the plain for an hour, we began to descend, and soon reached *Las Vigas*, a straggling village of huts, like *La Hoya*—